

Even the Memories by oogonium

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: Gen

Language: English

Characters: Eleven (Stranger Things), Jim "Chief" Hopper, Jonathan Byers, Joyce Byers, Kali Prasad, Maxine "Max" Mayfield, Nancy Wheeler, Steve Harrington

Relationships: Jonathan Byers & Steve Harrington, Kali Prasad & Steve Harrington

Status: Completed

Published: 2018-02-17

Updated: 2018-02-17

Packaged: 2022-04-21 15:08:02

Rating: Teen And Up Audiences

Warnings: No Archive Warnings Apply

Chapters: 1

Words: 1,479

Publisher: archiveofourown.org

Summary:

The call comes sometime after midnight.

Something's wrong with Steve.

Even the Memories

Author's Note:

I just need consistent and copious instances of the Stranger Things kids supporting one another. Also, I just rewatched the series ending and have many feelings. Hope you enjoy!

The call comes sometime after midnight. Will's Supercom crackles to life beside the couch and for a moment Kali can only hear the voice of a young girl.

"Jane?? Jane is that you? Where are you? What's wrong?" Nothing. She doesn't even think to check kids' rooms, too scared her sister might be trapped in a nightmare- or worse.

"Jane?!"

She's about to wake the entire household when she hears the voice come through again.

"No! No- shit- no it's Max! Who's there?"

Kali takes a moment to breathe before answering, more than a little annoyed, "This is Kali. Jane- El's sister. What's going on?"

She hears a small scuffle underneath all the static before Max responds,

"It's Steve. There's something wrong with him."

Kali wastes no time in waking Joyce and Hopper.

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The car ride to the Harrington house takes longer than necessary; in

Kali's haste to wake Hopper and Joyce, she also wakes the kids. One unnecessary stand-off later, she, Jane, Jonathan, Joyce, and Hopper pull into the house's spacious driveway. As he pulls the keys from the ignition, Hopper turns to look at the family.

"You're sure Max didn't mention anything specific about what was wrong with him?"

Kali shakes her head, "She just said something was wrong, and I told her that we would be here as soon as possible."

She doesn't like the look on his face as he thinks through the problem once more. He only reacts when Joyce reaches out to touch his arm, "Hop, we need to get in there."

He turns and nods once before looking each one of them in the eye, "I go in first, I stay in the lead. No matter what happens, no sudden movements."

As they approach the door, he looks to Kali and Jonathan, "Be ready for anything, you got that?". They can only nod in response before he opens the unlocked door.

They find Max hiding behind the living room couch, still in her pajamas and holding a regular baseball bat. Before Hopper can say anything, Joyce pushes her way from the back to pull the scared girl into a hug.

"Sweetie, what's happening? Where's Steve?" Max can only drop the bat and hug Joyce back, her eyes still wide and scared.

Hopper moves in closer, "Is he still in the house? Max? Did he hurt you??" Max quickly shakes her head and then whispers,

"He's in the upstairs hallway. I'm fine. He's- he has the bat, he keeps saying- he keeps saying he's too late." at the very end of her sentence, her voice begins to break and Joyce pulls her closer as she begins to break down.

"I- at first I thought- I thought I had done something to- just like

when- Billy" Max buries her head beneath Joyce's and begins to cry earnestly. Jane sidesteps the Chief before laying a hand on her friend's shoulder and leaning down to whisper to her, consoling her. Hopper looks at Jonathan and Kali, still behind him.

"You guys stay down here. I'm going upstairs to see if I can talk to him."

"I'm coming as well."

He turns to glare at Kali, "No, you are not. You are going to stay here and make sure nothing else happens. Understand?"

She doesn't look away from him as she distorts the shape of the stairs leading upward, watching Hopper clench his jaw in frustration.

"I'm. Coming. Too."

Jonathan steps in next to her, "So am I."

Hopper only sighs as he beckons them both towards the now normal stairs.

Steve isn't in the upstairs hallway. Kali can see scratches on the bottom of the drywall, she can feel the crunch of a broken frame underneath her boots. Slowly and smoothly, they push each door halfway open, scanning inside and then moving forward again. When they reach the last door on the left, Jonathan shares a look with them, making sure they are all ready for what awaits. He pushes the door open all the way,

"Steve," he whispers, "are you there, buddy?"

Kali does her best to push down the memories of her old Chicago family as she sees what the nightmares have done to her friend. Steve Harrington is sitting on his bed, curled in on his bat- hands tensely wrapped around its handle- his eyes red and his cheeks wet. There's a bruise on the side of his arm and a rip on the leg of his pajamas. He looks at Jonathan as if he's seeing a ghost.

"I'm sorry. I'm so so sorry."

Jonathan slowly walks forward, hands outstretched, voice beginning to tremble.

"There's nothing to be sorry about, Steve. You're okay, it's okay." at this Steve violently shakes his head, starting to cry.

"I should have come back sooner. Should have turned around sooner. I should have-" He drops his head, pulling the bat closer to his chest.

"Steve! We're fine! Everyone! You, me, Nancy, we made it out."

Another broken sob, "Nancy..."

"Steve? What's wrong? I'm right here."

Three pairs of eyes turn to look at Nancy Wheeler push her way into his room, a sympathetic smile on her face, one hand out towards Steve.

He lowers the bat, staring at her as she makes her way to him, "Nance?" he whispers. She nods once, still smiling softly.

"I'm here Steve, I'm right here." She sits next to him on the bed, gently touching his arm. He stares at her, not reacting just yet. Jonathan and Hopper remain rooted to the spot, too afraid to break whatever tentative peace has been achieved.

"Put the bat down, Steve, it's okay. You don't need it anymore." His grip relaxes as he turns his body, one hand reaching out to push the hair out of her face. He continues to stare.

"They're supposed to be blue."

Kali can feel her veins go icy. Nancy's eyes are supposed to be blue.

It's almost as if all the air has been sucked out of the room. From the corner of her eye, she can see Jonathan and the Chief prepare themselves for whatever fallout may occur. Steve turns to look at them before he can see Nancy disappear next to him, wincing as he feels it happen. He stares at each of them, eyes finally resting on Kali.

"Why?"

She swallows, "It felt like the best way to calm you down." a beat, "I shouldn't have. I'm sorry."

Steve drops the bat, hand going to the spot where Nancy sat, twisting the sheets in his fist. He seems to sag under a new weight.

"What are you doing here?"

Hopper answers, "Max called on the walkie, she said you were in trouble, we came to help." Steve pulls his knees to his chest, "Is she okay?"

Kali tries not to notice the undercurrent of shame in his question, makes a mental note to remind him more often that he is nothing like Max's old family. "She's fine, she's downstairs with El and Joyce. She's worried about you." Slowly, she begins to walk to Steve's side, making sure to move only when he nods his consent. Jonathan moves to his other side.

"I'm sorry."

She finds herself shaking her head just as Jonathan shakes his as well, reaching out to hold Steve's shoulder. "You're our friend. You're family" She nods, "We're here because we're family, and as a family, we protect each other from everything," she makes sure to catch his eye, "even memories."

They pull the blankets back over their friend's shoulders as the Chief

quietly says something about going downstairs to tell the girls everything is okay. Fifteen minutes later, Joyce and Jane have made mugs of weak tea, found at the back of the pantry, and the five kids find themselves piled into Steve's room for the night. The hours pass and from her spot sitting in the top corner of the double bed, Kali can see the sun peeking through the shades of the window. Steve sighs in his sleep and turns to look up at her, groggily. She looks down, meeting his gaze,

"I'm sorry, again, for Nancy, I-" he stops her with a hand to the crook of her arm.

"Just, promise me you won't do it again."

She places her hand over his

"I promise."

He nods once before pulling his hand back and closing his eyes again. "I'm glad you guys came, I'm glad you came. Thank You." His voice sounds so incredibly tired in the silence of the bedroom, and instead of responding, Kali simply pulls the covers higher over him.

"You're welcome," she whispers.

Careful not to disturb Jane or Max or Jonathan, Kali makes her way out of the bedroom and down to the kitchen. The day has begun, but she fails to see the harm in letting them sleep for a little while longer.